of mwanô to that of the ésa. The eldest son is not only almost the exclusive heir to property -- "he inherits at least seven tenths," writes Mr. Bertaut -- but he also has religious privileges. He is the sole guardian of the skulls of ancestors, and he has political privileges, if he shows himself sufficiently able.

Within the maternal kinship the most important relations are those between nephew (mwanô kal) and maternal uncle (nya-nduma). Of this we have proof in an early study of the Fang of the N'Djolé region, and in a recent document written at the time of a clan gathering which shows the maintenance of some of these relations. Captain Cursult (1) refers to them in a precise manner in his

1. Captain Cursult, "Monographie du secteur de N'Djolé au Gabon" [Monograph on the N'Djolé Sector in Gabon], Revue des Troupes Coloniales, 68, February, 1908.

monograph on the N'Djolé sector: "The relations between uncle and nephew are very close; during his life the nephew gives his uncle a great many presents to increase still further the price paid to his uncle for his mother. In the same way, whenever his nephew pays him a visit, the uncle kills a chicken for him, etc... as does the father-in-law for his son-in-law. ... If a poor nephew needs goods to pay for a palaver or to get married, he can go to his uncle, sure that he will receive help from him, even if he has not often given him presents. It is a supreme shame for a man to send away the son of his sister with empty hands." Maternal uncle and nephew have a share in the inheritance. An official report of the clan gathering of the Yémisèm-Éba still provides in 1948 for the "indemnity" due at the time of the death of a nya-ndûma (a sum corresponding to the value of a woman and a sheep) and on the death of a mwanô-kal (a slightly smaller sum, "varying according to the size of the inheritance," and a sheep). (2)

2. Réunion de 25 villages de la tribu Yémissem a Affénane (District d'Oyem) du 12 au 19 juillet, 1948 [Gathering of 25 villages of the Yémissem tribe at

example, by the premature death of the fiancée. Almost all customary courts now refuse /to uphold/ repayment when a woman has died without issue, as was the old custom.

The other forms of marriage were abom, marriage by abduction, which was regularized by later payment of the "bride price" (meso ngon = arrival of the girl); putting in pawn for debt, which was made permanent /53/ by nonrepayment; éjian, substitution for a fiancée deceased before marriage or for a wife who died without issue (in such cases a younger sister of the dead woman was often provided); taff abim, corpse price, that is, the giving in payment of a young woman as blood money after a homicide; exchange of women between clans, usually on the occasion of an alliance /i.e. through marriage/, élat (1).

1. Elat = alliance, agreement; bilelat = kindred, the whole body of relatives and affinal kin.

Exchange or loan of women, mvia, was perhaps a form of hospitable prostitution. It apparently did not apply to the benya binga, the "true wives," in any case never to the ôsua minga, the first wife, who would have considered it a reason for divorce without repayment of bride price. In the same way, nkuan, sale, was not the equivalent of marriage and must have applied mainly to foreigners, though perhaps sometimes to Pahouin girls pawned and not redeemed.

The inheritance of widows did not automatically have the same value as marriage. It was usually permitted only between succeeding generations—from father to son, from elder to younger brother; inheriting by an older from a younger brother appears in recent law. Furthermore, the heir possessed the right of renunciation, except with respect to his mother, whom he had to support but whom he would naturally not make his wife. He could send other widows back to their families, keeping their children, who belonged to his clan. To require repayment of the bride price for a widow's "liberation" seems to be a recent deviation; in the past this custom must have applied only to barren women or to those whose children had not lived, but only when they returned to live with their families without remarrying. The moment a widow remarried outside the family of her deceased husband, the "bride price" went to the latter's heirs, and

brought produce of the locality, the system of directions very probably being ascribed to sexual categories, the northeast area, male and the southwest area, female. It would be advisable to know more about the ritual use of different tools and implements in order to throw more light on the subject. We know that the saber, fa, is essentially male, that the hunting bell tied to a dog's neck, angôñ, is essentially female, that the drum-telephone, nkul, is androgynous (though women are not allowed to use it); the rifle, ngal, is probably epicene, and the same is true for a few other objects, but we know almost nothing about the effect of this sexual differentiation upon property and its conveyance.

In any case, since the introduction of a money economy, personal property /propriété mobilière/ has become almost entirely individual. Personal property /meubles/ that remains collective is primarily so by appropriation, like the equipment of associations, the profits of their subscriptions, sometimes objects bought in common by members of a family because of their cost or function—like the sewing machines obtained from Spanish Guinea after the last war, for instance.

Personal property still involves some restrictions for women and young men, although they are less and less accepted. Respectful sons and submissive wives still allow their fathers and husbands to use the objects acquired by the earnings of their labor, but when they rebel the trend of the courts is increasingly in their favor. However, the obligatory aid arising from family ties still holds good, and to refuse to "lend" something to a monyañ is likely to be frowned on, which is a serious matter. Thus there survives a kind of right of collective family use working against individual /ownership of/ personal property.

g. Inheritance, Guardianship

These come about from death or disappearance. A paternal curse did not entail loss of civil rights, but the possessions left behind by an accursed son who quit his village were confiscated and divided among his brothers.

The disposal of possessions left by a dead man, called élik from lik • to leave, took place at the end of the period of mourning, meyep, perhaps /77/ a mbu, six months after death. This waiting period tends to become shorter and in towns usually lasts a month,

a long enough interval in which to inform and call together the eventual heirs; in villages it remains longer.

The élik includes on the debit side the family debts incurred by the de cujus, but not his purely personal debts, which die with him; the distinction is sometimes hard to make and gives rise to suits between the heirs and creditors of the dead man. The debit side also includes the funeral costs, especially compensation to the diviner called in to determine the cause of death (but the expenses of the final illness are considered to be a personal debt). Assets cover all real and personal property that belonged to the deceased, including his wives. The settlement, akap = distribution, is directed by the nkap élik, distributor of the inheritance, usually a ntôl môt, a kinsman or affinal relative not benefiting from the inheritance and appointed either by the de cujus or by the heirs themselves. Inheritances are more important now than they used to be, not only because there are more, and a greater variety of, objects to be distributed but also because the custom is dying out of destroying or burying part of them during the funeral rites.

There are six degrees of possible heirs: male offspring and their male descendants; full brothers; half brothers on the father's side; paternal first cousins, bobenyañ; clan nephews, hence brother's sons, bobendôm; uterine brothers, nephews, and grandsons of the clan, hence bastards, bobengon, and legitimate nephews and grandsons outside the clan, bobekal. Inheritance does not devolve by ascending order except in the complete absence of descending heirs.

The eldest of the heirs of the first degree called to the inheritance, ntôl mon, is privileged; he is the replacement, njian, for the dead man. To him go the hut, the family jewelry, ancestral cult objects, especially the bieti basket, the rifle, and certain valuable possessions like bicycles, sewing machines, etc. The other possessions are divided among the other heirs of the same degree. The njian's right of seniority is beginning to be criticized; it is gradually ceasing to apply to plantations, and now the heirs are demanding a division into portions of equal value along lines similar to those of the Civil Code.

The possessions left by a woman went in the first instance to her daughters, in their absence to her co-wives, and in their absence to her husband. With the present instability of marriage, related to the economic emancipation of women, this order of inheritance is

428 very much questioned: one often sees a woman's family trying to get hold of the inheritance on the grounds of incomplete payment of the bride price.

Oral wills are increasingly being replaced by written wills. The testator may himself kap élik, distribute the inheritance, and favor certain heirs. He cannot entirely disinherit the nlɔ̀l mon except by cursing him, unless the latter has left the village in an apparently final manner, in which case a younger brother becomes njian. /78/

Disappearance is a question of fact. When a man has stayed away for a long time without sending news, and no one knows where he is, his elders and his brothers may decide to share his possessions. This division is canceled should he return.

429 Guardianship of a minor, meba'ale or akalé (from ba'ale or kalé to take care of, watch over) is given to a nya mɔ̀ɔ̀ of a higher age grade, preferably a paternal uncle, ésa (lit., father) or paternal grandparent, émvam; in their absence it is given to an elder brother; in the absence of all these, to a senior member of the family or clan. The maternal uncle, ndomenyan, acts as a kind of deputy guardian with the duty of supervising the guardianship. A ward who is mal-treated by his guardian will seek refuge with his maternal uncle.

The guardian, mba'ak mon or nkalé mon, has by virtue of his age and of their kinship tie full power over an orphan, mone nyui or mo'nyui. He cannot, however, have control of his possessions, which must be restored in full, either in kind or in /equivalent/ value, when the orphan reaches majority. In theory a guardian ought to arrange his ward's marriage at his own expense, a tradition that is dying out with the decrease in family property. When the ward grows up he may demand an accounting of the guardianship, provided that there is no insult to the guardian. A family council composed of elders, minɔ̀l, deals with such a case.

The mba'ale mon responsible for the guardianship of a girl is the person who approves her marriage and accepts the nsuba, of which he must reserve the total for the marriage of the girl's brothers if they also are minors. Guardianship of a girl is always given to her eldest brother if he is grown at the time of the father's death; if not, she is handed over to him when he reaches majority by the mba'ale mon, if she has not been married during the brother's minority. Furthermore, even in the latter case, it falls to him to repay the nsuba should the girl be divorced after he has passed out of guardianship.

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

the palaver house, where he loves to sit and gossip around the log fire, or lounge on the *Bamy* (a native bed of poles). 517

Dancing is a favourite pastime, especially at the time of new moon, when the dance seems to have some religious significance. A Fang dance is a sight worth seeing; arrayed in long streaming armlets of dried grass, and large bunches of forest beans and molluscs shells tied around the ankles for castanets, they go through a series of rapid and graceful movements, some of which are not entirely free from obscenity. Flaming torches made of resin wrapped in plantain leaves are stuck in the ground and the drums keep up a perfect fusillade; the whole making a weird and extremely interesting spectacle. With short intervals of rest the dance usually continues throughout the night until daybreak (photo of dance shown on screen). 535 573

III.—*Clothing, Ornaments, Painting and Tattooing.*

Fang men and women usually go about bareheaded; some obtain imported straw and felt hats from the traders and are very proud of them. A red worsted night-cap sold at the factories is very popular and much worn. These head coverings are chiefly worn for ornament and not to afford protection from the sun or weather. Until the opening up of trade among the Fang people their clothing amounted to almost nothing. The men wore a waist cloth made of bark from certain trees, a strong, tough, fibrous material, and the women wore a girdle stripped from the plantain stem, with some leaves from the bush or a piece of the plantain leaf tucked through the girdle in front and passed downward, backward and upward between the limbs and fastened to the girdle behind. Very often the women wore a kind of bustle made of dried grass dyed black, or red. In sitting down the women are very careful to first arrange the bustle. The native bark cloth, the girdle and bustle, are still worn in the bush towns, the women often make the girdle of imported glass beads strung on string made from pineapple fibre, but people living in towns along the river banks wear imported cloths obtained in trade. As a general rule boys and girls run about without clothing until five or six years of age. Imported cloth is worn by both sexes and is often sewn together very skilfully and decorated with pieces of different colours. There are no recognised peculiarities of dress restricted to the subdivision of tribes. The cloth is cut out and sewed by each individual owner unless it is a trade cloth previously sewn. Cloth is usually hemmed and worn as a simple wrapper around the waist, and held in place by rolling in and tucking the upper border on itself. The upper portion of the body is not much covered by the cloth although some men and women wear it tied high up around the neck. There is no difference between the indoor and outdoor clothing. When imported needles and thread can be obtained they are used, but I have seen very skilful sewing done with a sharp piece of bamboo for a needle and thread made of pineapple fibre. Upon the death of parents, clothes descend to the children. In saluting a visitor it is not customary to remove a hat or cap, if one is being worn, or any other article of clothing. 291 516 [illegible] 572 576